

19/11  
AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE OFFICES

OFFICE  
EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE  
COUNCIL

19, RUE DE TÉHÉRAN  
PARIS (8<sup>e</sup>)

TELEPHONES  
LOCAL AND LONG DISTANCE  
LABORDE 21-66  
CABLES AND TELEGRAMS  
JOINTFUND: PARIS

#532


April 6th, 1937.

Council for German Jewry  
Woburn House  
Upper Woburn Place  
London, W.C.1.

Dear Sirs:

We are sending you herewith two copies of the Minutes  
of the meeting of the Refugee Committees held in Paris, March 14th, 1937.

Sincerely yours,

  
Dr. B. Kahn  
Chairman

jo  
enc.

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Strictly Confidential

Meeting of the Refugee Committees of the Various Countries  
held on Sunday, March 14th, 1937, at the offices of  
the American Joint Distribution Committee, Paris.

THOSE PRESENT:

England

Prof. N. Bentwich, Council for German Jewry, London  
Mr. Davidson, Jewish Refugees Committee, London

France

M. Albert Levy, Comité d'Aide aux Réfugiés Allemands, Paris  
Chairman of Meeting

R.R. Lambert, Comité d'Aide aux Réfugiés Allemands, Paris  
Gaston Kahn, " " " " " "

E. Oungre,	Hicem, Paris
M. Melamede,	" "
M. Dijour,	" "
M. Bernstein,	" "
M. Schah,	" "

Holland

Mrs. van Tijn, Comité voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen, Amsterdam

Belgium

M. Gottschalk, Comité d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Victimes de  
l'Antisémitisme, Brussels.

American Joint Distribution Committee

Dr. Kahn  
Mr. Schweitzer  
Mr. Chapiro

Representatives of Switzerland and other countries were also present.

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A G E N D A

of the  
Conference of the Refugee Committees held in Paris

March 14th, 1937

1. Reports of the various countries
  2. Legal status of the refugees in the various countries - Geneva Convention
  3. Plans of the various committees for the continuation of their work
  4. Plans to prevent futile migration within the countries and also purposeless emigration from country to country
  5. Constructive activities for the refugees in the various countries
  6. Training and retraining
  7. Emigration from refugee countries
  8. Miscellaneous.
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MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN JOINT  
DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, JOINTLY WITH THE COUNCIL FOR GERMAN JEWRY  
AND THE HICEM, WITH THE REFUGEE COMMITTEES OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES,  
HELD AT THE OFFICES OF THE AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE,  
19 rue de Teheran, PARIS, on MARCH 14th, 1937.

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Dr. KAHN: I have asked the representatives of the Refugee Committees of Belgium, France, England, Holland and Switzerland to meet here to confer on the activities of their respective committees. The aim of the Conference is to examine the situation of the refugees today in each of these countries and to find ways and means of assisting them in a competent and suitable manner. The further aim of the Conference is to give an opportunity to the representatives of the Refugee Committees to prove that, in spite of the heavy expenses connected with the aid for the refugees, this aid must be continued.

Many of the large organizations, which are not directly confronted with the refugee tragedy in respect to daily individual cases, may think that the continuation of this relief activity is no longer imperative, or they may consider that the countries to which these refugees have gone, especially the countries here represented, should be able to raise sufficient funds for the needs of the refugees without applying to the large organizations for additional financial assistance. As we have representatives from Germany here, they and the representatives of the refugee countries should be given an opportunity to show that the continuation of the activity of the refugee committees on behalf of the German Jews is absolutely necessary.

If this help is not extended, the countries will close their borders to any incoming German refugee, whether he be needy or have means, and in time of danger no German Jew would be able to leave Germany, but would be shut in, as in a concentration camp.

There is still another reason why the refugees must be helped. The countries in which the German Jewish refugees now find themselves form an opinion of these refugees - not only of those who came with sufficient funds to settle without aid, but also of those who are in need and may become a burden. The discontinuation of relief in behalf of the needy refugees would endanger the position of all those Jews in the various countries who have managed to establish themselves, and would also make it very difficult for further emigration from Germany, should this become necessary suddenly. Of course, we cannot forget the interest shown by the Jews in France, England, Holland and other countries. We must, therefore, conduct all activities in behalf of German refugees in such a manner that the Jews in the countries in which the refugees are, will not suffer in any way because of the refugees who may yet follow. They should not become a source of irritation wherever



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they are, and it is in the interest of all Jewry that no general anti-Jewish propaganda should be created in the various refugee countries. It will be difficult to reconcile these two points, but I think that much may come out of this conference.

The Minutes will, of course, be confidential so that everyone can speak frankly and openly. I hope that the outcome of this conference will mean an important step forward not only in favor of the German refugees but also in favor of all German Jews, be they outside of Germany or still inside that country which cannot be regarded as their permanent abode.

Mr. ALBERT LEVY, Chairman, (Comité d'assistance aux Réfugiés Allemands) explains that if French Jewry has been able to help in the organization of aid to German refugees in France, it is thanks to the great assistance given to it by the American organizations.

Mr. NORMAN BENTWICH (Council for German Jewry) gives general indications concerning the budgetary difficulties of the body he represents. Already the 1936 share of the one million pound fund to be raised in Great Britain and British Dominions in the years 1936/1939 has an overdraft of about £ 100,000 on the prospective income for 1937. The application for assistance from the Reichsvertretung presented to the major organizations - Council for German Jewry, Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) - amounts to £ 160,000 besides £ 15,000 asked for training in other European countries, outside of Germany, organized by the Zentrallausschuss.

Other applications to these bodies for subsidies include £ 40,000 for England, £ 50,000 for U.S.A., besides considerable sums for Palestine. A total sum of £ 700,000 is required. It has been calculated, in spite of heavy reductions in the various amounts that a gap of no less than £ 100,000 is to be reckoned with in the 1937 budget.

The main plank of the 1937 programme should be the assistance to emigration and the regulating of emigration to countries overseas. It is true that possibilities for emigration are much more restricted in 1937 than they were last year, especially as far as Palestine is concerned.

Mr. DAVIDSON (Jewish Refugees Committee) mentions that there are about 3,500 refugees in England. This number increases, especially as many refugees who had come to England with certain capital, have failed to make a success and are now utterly penniless. The Committee helps the needy refugees with a dole of 30/- per week. It has also 450 young people in training in various workshops but finds great difficulties in obtaining certificates even for those fifty young men who are training in Hachscharah for Palestine.

The Geneva Convention of July, 1936, has been ratified by the British government and refugees who cannot have their German passports renewed obtain identity certificates from the Home Office.

Mr. R. R. LAMBERT (Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés Allemands) gives 17,000 as the number of refugees who have been attended to by the Comité National (liquidated at the beginning of 1936) and by the Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés (which started its work in July 1936). There are at present 8,000 refugees in France, of whom about 2,000 need regular help. There are among them many "new poor" who, having used all their savings brought over from Germany, and are now at loose ends. The number of new arrivals from Germany only amounts, on an average, to about 100 per month.

The legal status of the refugees in France is definitely and satisfactorily solved by the ratification of the Geneva Convention. Every Jew, by that mere fact, who arrived in France from Germany before the 5th of August, 1936, receives the definite right to stay in France and, upon a certificate issued by the "Comité Central" (French section of Hicem) automatically obtains his "carte de travail". Over 800 of these have already been obtained, thanks to the "Comité Central" intervention.

2,000 demands for passports under the regulations based upon the Geneva Convention have been made and only 5% to 6% of these have been refused by the special inter-ministerial Commission set up in France as an advisory body.

Mr. MAX GOTTSCHALK (Comité d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Victimes de l'Antisemitisme) explains that the Brussels Committee which opened in 1933 closed its doors in May 1935 during which time 2,500 cases had been attended to, and in most cases emigration followed. Very few could be established in Brussels. The influx of refugees continued nevertheless and further funds were needed. In August last, a special appeal brought, no less than 1,200,000 Belgian francs, and it is hoped that £ 2,500 will be obtained annually. £ 2,000 have already been transferred to the Council for German Jewry.

The number of refugees during the last few months is as follows:

September 1936 .....	37 assisted by the committee
	<u>33</u> not assisted
	70
October 1936 .....	49 assisted
	<u>40</u> not assisted
	89
November 1936 .....	54 assisted
	<u>45</u> not assisted
	99
December 1936 .....	54 assisted
	<u>25</u> not assisted
	79

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January 1937 .....	66 assisted
	<u>37</u> not assisted
	103

February " .....	79 assisted
	<u>43</u> not assisted
	122

Of the 122 now registered with the committee, most of them will have to be sent to emigration countries.

Belgium has ratified the Geneva Convention and every refugee who was in Belgium before November 5, 1936, receives on his document the stamp of "refugee" and obtains automatically the right to work. It must be said that economic refugees are not accepted unless a guarantee is given that they will emigrate in the near future.

Mr. Schab (Hicem) who has lately been in Brussels and Antwerp gives 130 as the total number of refugees in these two cities. Of these about 40 are not fit for emigration and about 20 will be able to stay in Belgium. The remainder will be attended to by the Hicem in the next two or three months.

Mrs. VAN TIJN (Comite voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen) gives the following figures of refugees from Germany:

In 1935 .....	550
In 1936 .....	1110, of whom 340 remained in the country.

During January/February 1937 there were 225 arrivals, of whom 128 had to be registered for relief.

A total of 700 persons are now being helped regularly, besides 147 persons who have received one-time relief.

There are 110,000 Jews in Holland and 33,000 of them are members of the Jewish Community. The collection of funds is greatly hampered by the fact that only 800 of the above 33,000 earn more than 10,000 gulden per annum: 100 earn more than 30,000 and 4,000 to 5,000 earn less than 2,000 gulden per annum. It is therefore impossible without help from outside to continue refugee work. This work is the more important if the National-Socialist state of mind in Holland gains ground and if the work in behalf of the refugees is not strengthened. This state of mind would easily react not only against the refugees themselves, but also against Dutch Jewry in general. The Geneva Convention has not been ratified.

Mrs. van Tijn then reads the appended confidential statement.

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Mr. EDOUARD OUNGRE (Hicem) considers that the refugee problem has been liquidated with the exception of a certain residue in various countries. He insists that emigration from Germany should be organized within Germany itself, so that there should be no risk of sudden mass emigration which would have a very bad effect on the refugee problem of the countries which have a common frontier with Germany.

The delegate of the "Verband Schweiz. Israel. Armenpflegen" Zurich, explains that there is no possibility whatever of legalizing the status of refugees in Switzerland. The only thing that could be done is to prepare refugees, who happen to come to Switzerland, for further emigration overseas. It is, therefore, the broadening of the Zurich Committee's activities that is needed, and not its liquidation. A sum of 122,000 Swiss francs was spent in 1936 for 704 refugees. Of these, 440 were Germans, 115 stateless and 149 of various other nationalities. Of the total of 704, about 100 have emigrated (37 to Palestine) 30 are in a Hachscharah and 16 have been sent to an Italian Hachscharah. Only 20 of the total number of refugees could remain permanently in the country. At the present time there are 220 refugees in Switzerland, including Jews and non-Jews.

About 100 refugees need daily assistance until they can leave the country. The Zurich Committee since 1933 has collected about half a million Swiss francs.

The Geneva Convention has not been ratified.

Dr. B. KAHN gives a few details concerning Spain: From 200 to 220 German refugees, who had settled in Spain, have now returned to various European countries (France, Holland, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland) where they must be absorbed. Those who have remained in Spain are under the care of a special Committee composed of representatives of the various political parties and trade unions which participate in the Republican government.

#### Luncheon Interval

Upon resuming the debate (Par. 3 and 4 of the Agenda) Mr. OUNGRE (Hicem) again raises the question of emigration from Germany directly and also refers to the necessity of keeping a central register of the refugees in order to put a stop to the unnecessary travelling from country to country of people unwilling to emigrate.

Various speakers raised the problem as to where the refugees could go, considering that most of the oversea countries have more or less closed their frontiers.



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Still another question was raised - that of the landing money lacking in most cases, in spite of the fact that the refugee is in possession of his ticket and the necessary visa. A special fund for this purpose might be placed at the disposal of the competent bodies.

Dr. BERNSTEIN (Hicem) recalls that in spite of the decisions of the Vienna Conference, the committees that had participated continue to send refugees to other committees without preliminary inquiries being made. Another point to be considered is the large number of emigrated refugees who have not yet been able to settle definitely in their new country. It would be necessary to examine the urgency of taking steps for settling these on a sound footing. It would then be possible to look with greater hope upon further emigration overseas.

Dr. KAHN insists that illegal or semi-legal emigration should cease and only emigration, that is strictly in accordance with the regulations of the country to which refugees are being sent, should be undertaken.

After various explanations given by the delegates of the countries represented at the Conference on the methods of their activity and on their work in the direction of training and retraining, the attached three Resolutions were adopted by the Conference.

The Meeting was terminated at 6.30 p.m.

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## RESOLUTION

### I

1. The Conference calls attention to the fact that many immigrants are in danger of being expelled from the countries to which they have immigrated because their immigration has not been in accord with the general immigration regulations for the particular country.

To avoid such tragic and costly expulsions future emigration should be made only in accord with the requirements of the countries to which they are sent.

2. The position of many refugees who must be emigrated is such that they cannot establish themselves quickly in the new land of immigration, THEREFORE, the organizations should provide the necessary funds for setting up loan kassas or similar institutions to help establish definitely the new arrivals.



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## RESOLUTION

### II

The representatives of the Refugee Committees of Great Britain, France, Holland, Switzerland and Belgium.

Considering that the needy German Jews, who are compelled to leave their country, continue to arrive in the countries adjacent to Germany and in England,

Considering that by reason of their status of political refugees in the strictest sense of the word, they are authorized to reside either temporarily, while awaiting emigration, or definitely in the country of refuge and should be able to appeal to the existing refugee committees,

#### THEREFORE:

It seems impossible, at present, to liquidate the activities of these committees, as the closing down of some of them might bring about a state of actual danger for the national communities and for the refugees already established who benefit from the goodwill of the authorities by the very reason of the existence of such committees.

Although certain committees have managed until now to find locally the necessary resources needed for their activities, there are others whose burden is out of proportion to the local resources available:

It seems quite legitimate, therefore, that the countries which are free from direct mass immigration and which dispose of large financial possibilities, should intervene through the appropriate bodies in favor of these committees.

The Conference EXPRESSES its sincere thanks to the large organizations-American Joint Distribution Committee, Jewish Colonization Association, Council for German Jewry, Hicem,- whose generous help has given the bodies represented the means to insure in an adequate way the assistance to refugees.

AND EXPRESSES the wish that the large organizations just mentioned intervene in favor of certain committees, or continue and develop their interventions in favor of others.

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## RESOLUTION

### III

1. The Conference refers to the Resolution adopted in London at the end of October 1933 concerning the peregrinations of refugees from country to country which are to be considered from every standpoint as nefarious and undesirable.

2. The Conference is pleased to note the establishment by the Hicem, with the assistance of the various existing refugee committees, of a central Refugee Register to which they will always refer before taking any decisions on cases of refugees not arriving directly from Germany.

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That Holland has not yet reached a definitive decision regarding its adherence to the Geneva Convention of July 4th, 1936, is due to the fact that a large part of this Convention has been taken from the Agreement of October 28th, 1933, which provided a basis for the international settlement of the refugee problem.

Very few states ratified this Agreement, however, so that it is of little importance in the refugee question. A few months ago Great Britain and France accepted the Agreement of 1933 and thus the situation has been completely changed, since the question now arises whether the Agreement of 1933 must not be accepted simultaneously with the 1936 Convention.

The entire problem is now being studied and this explains the delay with regard to the Geneva Convention of July, 1936.

This has been communicated to me by a person qualified to speak in the matter and may therefore be considered official. Its publication, however, is not necessary.

Council for German Jewry: Minutes. March 14-April 6, 1937. TS  
Archives of the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief,  
1933-1960